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DE RUEHTG #0477/01 1411829
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 201829Z MAY 08
FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8146
INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCAACC/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL//J5// PRIORITY
RUEAHND/CDRJTFB SOTO CANO HO PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUMIAAA/HQ USSOUTHCOM J5 MIAMI FL PRIORITY
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0177
RUMIAAA/USMISSION MIAMI FL PRIORITY

UNCLAS TEGUCIGALPA 000477

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: OAS PGOV PREL
SUBJECT: TEGUCIGALPA RESPONSE TO UN DRIP FOLLOW-UP AND OAS
STATE OF PLAY

REF: SECSTATE 4241

¶11. (SBU) Summary. The Government of Honduras voted in favor of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (DRIP) but does not appear to be doing anything to implement the provisions of the declaration. Post is unaware of any indigenous groups taking any action under the declaration, although the Garifuna are pursuing land rights claims against Honduras in the InterAmerican Court on Human Rights. The Departments of State, Defense and USAID all support activities supporting indigenous people of Honduras. End Summary.

NO DRIP ACTION IN HONDURAS

¶12. (SBU) The GOH voted in favor of the UN DRIP, but has not responded to Post's repeated requests about whether they have done anything to support the Declaration. (Note: The Foreign Affairs Ministry continues to answer our requests for information by talking about the ethnic identity office at the Interior Ministry, whose work preceded the DRIP. This suggests that nothing new is being done.) Post will report any future response by the GOH.

¶13. (U) According to the 2007 Human Rights Country Report for Honduras, there are approximately 621,000 persons that are members of indigenous or other ethnic groups in Honduras. These groups include the Miskitos Tawahkas, Pech, Tolupans, Lencas, Chortis, Nahual, Islanders, and Garifunas, who live in 362 communities and generally have little or no political power to make decisions affecting their lands, cultures, traditions, and the allocation of natural resources.

¶14. (U) POLOFF met with Garifuna leaders in La Ceiba and Tela on May 5 and 6. The Garifuna are perhaps the most organized of the various ethnic groups and the most likely to pursue action under the DRIP. They are pursuing four cases regarding the illegal sale or use of Garifuna lands in the InterAmerican Court on Human Rights, however, they had never heard of the DRIP and are not planning any action under it at this time.

US DIPLOMATIC OUTREACH

¶15. (U) Post pursues a wide range of outreach activities directed towards the indigenous groups of Honduras. Department of State Foreign Service Officers meet on a regular basis with leaders of Garifuna and other groups. Two indigenous leaders have participated in the International

Visitor Leadership Program in the last 7 years. The Public Affairs section has conducted a number of programs with indigenous people over the last seven years, in particular the Afro-Honduran Garifuna community. For instance, in 2007, Post sponsored a US speaker to celebrate "Mes de la Historia Africana en Honduras," and sent the President of the Garifuna NGO, Organization for the Development of Ethnic Communities (ODECO), to participate in the White House Conference on the Americas. In April 2008, the Public Affairs section co-sponsored a three-day speaker program with ODECO focused on minority health issues, "Advances and Challenges in the Fight Against Racism, Actions and Opportunities for the Development of Afro-Descendent Communities."

USG ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

¶16. (U) The USG provides substantial assistance to indigenous groups through several USAID and DOD programs. The following several paragraphs describe this assistance in detail.

¶17. (U) The USAID Integrated Watershed Resources Management (MIRA, in Spanish) project provides the Garifuna community of Rio Esteban (population: 4,000) with assistance in watershed management, disaster preparedness, and tourism promotion. In coordination with the U.S. Forest Service, MIRA also has established an alliance with the NGO Green Wood to improve the household income of approximately 100 Pech families by teaching them how to utilize their natural resources more efficiently, linking them to markets, and helping to implement sustainable forest management plans.

¶18. (U) USAID has trained 37 Lencas and Chortis in trade capacity building through its Trade, Environment and Agriculture program.

¶19. (U) The USAID Rural Enterprise Development (RED) project has assisted approximately 770 Lencas, 80 Chortis, and 20 Toulapans in strengthening and diversifying their agricultural production by focusing on the production of high-value crops and value-added products for export and regional markets.

¶110. (U) The USAID health program provides assistance to the GOH at the central and departmental levels to improve family planning, maternal and child services in rural areas of Honduras where most indigenous communities are located. Through decentralization of health services provision, 17,196 indigenous people (Lencas and Chortis) have access to a defined basic package of services.

¶111. (U) With an HIV prevalence rate of 4.5 percent, the Garifuna population is one of the most affected in Honduras. The USAID HIV program works with a local NGO on mass media HIV prevention activities and voluntary HIV counseling and testing.

¶112. (U) The USAID education program has given decentralized technical assistance and teacher training, standards, curriculum calendars and monthly standardized formative tests for all Honduran children in primary school, including in indigenous communities.

¶113. (U) The USAID Education for All program includes 7,387 indigenous participants in 640 centers located in ten of Honduras's eighteen departments.

¶114. (U) The USAID Cooperative Association of States for Scholarships (CASS) program included eighteen indigenous participants who traveled to the United States for training in 2007. They include seven Garifunas, two Miskitos, eight Lencas, and one Chorti.

¶115. (U) Through the USAID Title II Food for Peace program, an estimated 122,158 Lencas and Chortis have received assistance through \$1.55 million in food commodities to address the

multiple causes and effects of food insecurity by focusing on maternal and child health, agricultural productivity, and local capacities development and strengthening.

¶16. (U) Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) centers developed through USAID's Rule of Law program are providing conciliation services to Garifuna and Lenca communities. These ADR centers are contributing to building a culture of peace in many communities by resolving conflicts that otherwise could lead to violence.

¶17. (U) In the last few years, USAID has constructed water systems for several Garifuna communities, as well as a health center in a Garifuna community near La Ceiba.

¶18. (U) During the last four years, USAID has been using local currency funds to support infrastructure activities in several indigenous communities, including funding a rural electrification system in a Lenca community, and \$1.6 million of activities in La Mosquitia. The investment plan in La Mosquitia consists of health centers, schools, an electrification system, a water system and the construction and repair of several bridges.

¶19. (U) The Department of Defense (DOD) provides approximately \$4 million in Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff funds to support fifteen medical brigades in La Paz, Comayagua and the Gracias a Dios departments. La Paz and Comayagua areas are home to many Lenca people and Gracias a Dios is predominantly Moskito. The funds also support five schools and one medical clinic in Las Paz and Comayagua.

¶20. (U) DOD provided over \$2 million in Humanitarian Assistance Program Funds in Gracias a Dios, building two schools, potable water systems, upgrading an orphanage, and building a hyperbaric chamber for injured lobster divers.

¶21. (U) DOD also provides \$1 million in Humanitarian and Civic Assistance funds to support twelve medical brigades working in impoverished areas of Tegucigalpa, La Ceiba, and San Pedro Sula, serving a number of indigenous and ethnic groups that live in and around those areas.
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